WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of adjusting a search-processing load for a wireless device, comprising:

measuring the frequency in which a reference sector is searched;

determining if the frequency in which a reference sector is searched is greater than a predetermined limit; and

reducing the search processing load when the frequency in which a reference sector is searched is greater than the predetermined limit.

2. The method of Claim 1, further comprising pausing processing associated with pilot searches for a predetermined time period to reduce the search processing load.

3. The method of Claim 1, further comprising adjusting a set of search parameters to lower the search-processing load.

4. The method of Claim 1, further comprising searching one of a plurality of subsets of secondary sectors each time the reference sector is searched.

5. The method of Claim 4, further comprising selecting a different one of the plurality of subsets of secondary sectors with each reference sector search.

6. The method of Claim 1, further comprising increasing the search processing load when the frequency in which a reference sector is searched is below than the predetermined limit.

7. The method of Claim 1, further comprising selecting a reference sector.

8. The method of Claim 7, wherein the reference sector is selected from a group consisting of the earliest received signal, the strongest received signal, and the most reliable signal.

9. The method of Claim 1, further comprising adjusting the predetermined limit based on historical information.

10. The method of Claim 1, further comprising reselecting the reference sector following a handoff.

11. A mobile station for use in a wireless communication system comprising a processor which determines how often a reference sector is being searched and compares how often the reference sector is searched to a threshold value, wherein the processor reduces how often the reference sector is searched when the reference sector is searched more than the threshold value.

12. The mobile station of Claim 11, wherein the processor reduces how often the reference sector is searched

by pausing processing associated with pilot searches for a predetermined time period.

13. The mobile station of Claim 11, wherein the processor reduces how often the reference sector is searched by adjusting a set of search parameters.

14. The mobile station of Claim 11, wherein the mobile station searches one of a plurality of subsets of secondary sectors each time the reference sector is searched.

15. The mobile station of Claim 14, wherein the mobile station selects a different one of the plurality of subsets of secondary sectors with each reference sector search.

16. The mobile station of Claim 11, wherein the processor increases how often the reference sector is searched when the reference sector is searched less than the threshold value.

17. The mobile station of Claim 11, wherein the processor selects a reference sector.

18. The mobile station of Claim 17, wherein the reference sector is selected from a group consisting of the earliest received signal, the strongest received signal, and the most reliable signal.

19. The mobile station of Claim 11, wherein the processor adjusts the threshold value based on historical information.

20. The mobile station of Claim 11, wherein the mobile station reselects the reference sector following a handoff.